

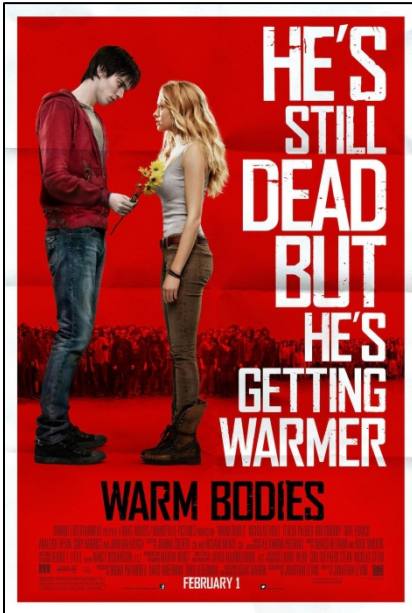
In theaters

“Warm Bodies”

Zombies are so misunderstood



By Jayson Burns



I'll be honest, I groaned (pun intended) when I first heard about the new zombie-romantic comedy film, “Warm Bodies.” While I wasn't in-line with those claiming Hollywood is trying to do to zombies what they did to vampires, I thought it made for kind of a stupid premise. How can you make a love story out something that's brain-dead? Well, “Warm Bodies” admittedly makes a decent attempt at this, though with its share of problems.

The film follows R (Nicholas Hoult), a zombie who falls in love with a living girl named Julia (Teresa Palmer) after eating her boyfriend. In order to protect her, R brings her to his makeshift home at an airport, where the two slowly begin to bond and R starts to gain some of his humanity back. The zombies and the humans do not approve of their relationship, however, and the two have to prove to everyone that it is indeed becoming possible for the both sides to live together.

Those planning for the inevitable zombie apocalypse will definitely have a problem sympathizing with the walking corpses in “Warm Bodies.” The audience is told that the zombies take no pleasure in killing and eating humans. They have to in order to survive. And yet, we see R and his zombie friends grin eagerly when they first smell human flesh. In general, the story doesn't do much to deprogram my response to shoot a zombie first and ask questions later. Granted, though, I probably wouldn't shoot R, as the film does a good job in showing his transformation.

I also really want to complain about the reason why zombies can suddenly start feeling human emotions, but I was able to suspend my disbelief long enough to let it slide. As odd as it is, it's actually kind of funny.

R, in fact, is probably the best aspect of this film, thanks mostly to Nicholas Hoult's performance. There's a nice contrast between his inner-monologues (which sound normal) and his gasping zombie-talk, and he's an overall nice person (eating human flesh aside). I can't really say the same for Teresa Palmer's performance as Julia, though, as there were many times her personality annoyed me. Maybe most of it had to do with the writing, but there were some line deliveries from her that just didn't sound natural. Everyone else did an OK job, Rod Corrdry was funny as R's zombie friend M, but some actors like John Malkovich just didn't seem all that involved with their characters.

Die-hard fans of the zombie genre are going to hate some of the “zombie rules” that are bent around to fit the storyline. Aside from being able to run (which I personally like, but there have been some frighteningly heated debates online), it apparently only takes a smudge of zombie blood on a person to make them “blend in” with the horde. It just doesn't make sense how that small amount would overcome the rest of the person's scent, but despite this to make it even worse the movie claims that “corpses don't bleed.” However, I very much liked the explanation as to why zombies eat brains, and in all honesty even the great zombie movies don't follow every rule exactly.

As for the special effects in the film, much of the computer generated images just didn't look like they were physically there. For example, the bonies (skeletal zombies) look creepy, but they just don't have any weight to them.

While “Warm Bodies” will undoubtedly cause more arguments from zombie fans, the film did make an OK attempt at doing something different with the genre and others will find it enjoyable. That still doesn't mean I'm going to scrap my zombie plan, though.

This film is rated PG-13.